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Sermon Notes

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Transforming the Mind by the Word of God

Psalm 119

I. Changing Your Mind

- In the 17th century, Spanish Inquisition; conversion through torture
- 1778; Austrian doctor; Franz Anton Mesmer, the people were said to be “Mesmerized.”
- 1950’s, Korean war, American soldiers ; “brain washing”; developed by Russian communists in the 1930’s, isolation in conditions of constant physical discomfort... relentless humiliating interrogations; susceptible to new ideas, which his interrogators plant and nurture with sudden, friendly reassurances
- Super Bowl commercials; Gillette, Coca-Cola, Ford, Rolex, and American Airlines

Tonight, I’m going to speak to you about the transformation of the mind, but not in any of these ways. The complex web of your mind is the canvas on which God want to paint the masterpiece of His glory; it is the score sheet on which He wants to compose His most magnificent symphony; it is therefore also the battlefield in which Satan wants to fight to the death... the place of Satan’s constant warfare against your soul.

The human mind, therefore, can either be the greatest theater of God’s glory, or the most repulsive example of the effects of sin.

Our goal: why & how to renew your mind!

II. A Brief History of the Mind

A. The Human Brain: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

- 100 billion neurons; (Amazon rain forest stretches 2.7 million sq. miles and it has 100 billion trees)
- Each neuron has as many connections as these are leaves on an average tree
- If you simply counted the neural connections in the cerebral cortex, the outer layer of the brain, at the rate of one per second it would take 32 million years

- Center of memory, mood, instinct, will, emotion, decision, all bodily function
- Seat of individuality and personal history... you train your brain with every experience you go through in life
- Power of interpretation centered in the brain: sight, sound, touch, smell, taste
 1. Created in the image of God
 2. Created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever
 3. Created to “Know the glory of God”

B. The Fallen Mind

1. Described most clearly in Romans 1: willful twisting of the truth of God

Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

2. Characterizes life apart from God: darkness in the mind leads to darkness in life

Ephesians 4:17-19 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

3. Natural mind hostile to God and ignorant of things of God

Romans 8:7 “the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.”

1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

C. The Regenerated Mind

1. A “New creation”

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

2. New minds to see the glory of Christ

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

3. Literally the mind of Christ give us!

1 Corinthians 2:16 “We have the mind of Christ.”

D. The Renewed Mind

Romans 12:2 “Be transformed by the renewing of your mind...”

1. Constant commitment
2. Also struggle with a “divided” mind... partly obedient, partly sinful; Romans 7
3. Start of transformation of entire person... all sanctification starts in the mind

E. The Glorified Mind

1. Perfect in knowledge of God (John 17:3)

John 17:3 “Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

2. Full knowledge (1 Cor. 13:12)

1 Corinthians 13:9-12 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. ¹² Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

Summary: gift....twisted.... regenerated... renewed daily.... glorified

III. The Transformation of the Mind by the Word of God

A. The Call to Be Holy

Deuteronomy 7:6 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

2 Corinthians 6:17 “Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.”

Holiness means separation... separate from the world, especially in the way we think, in our values, in our minds; Jesus calls it “sanctification”... and he prays it for you

B. Sanctified by the Truth: John 17

John 17:17 *“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”*

1. Jesus prays that we be set apart as holy to God
2. He also gives the method by which this will happen: “sanctify them by the truth”
 - Truth sanctifies... it sets us apart as holy IN OUR MINDS, OUR WAY OF THINKING
 - Truth purifies our thoughts, and through our thoughts our whole lives as well
3. Jesus also gives the great tool for this sanctification:

“your word is truth.”

“Set them apart as holy, make them different from the world by infusing them with the truth. And Father, it is your word that is truth. Father, use your word to change their minds and their hearts.”

IV. Psalm 119: The Goal is Understanding

A. What is Spiritual Understanding?

1. A Proper Relationship to God: “Fear of the Lord”

119:79 *May those who fear you turn to me, those who understand your statutes.*

Therefore, “fear of the Lord” = “understanding His statutes”

Proverbs 1:7 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

Understanding begins when you see a living person, a passionate holy God, behind the black marks on the page! This is a personal matter, a personal relationship is at stake if we disobey:

119:102 *I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me.*

2. Insight & Illumination

119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

119:130 *The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*

Illus. The “Aha!!” discoveries... “This is what that means!!” Life begins to make sense

3. Knowledge and Good Judgment

119:66 *Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I believe in your commands.*

- a. knowledge = growing “data base” of insights about God, yourself, the world, and every topic in life: life, death, work, play, money, family, and everything covered in the Bible
- b. good judgment = the ability to discern between wise and foolish paths

B. Source of Understanding

Job 28... where do you find understanding??

1. The Lord gives it

119:73 Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands.

- a. Psalmist knows: the same hands that made Him also can give him understanding
- b. God controls this issue... we cannot get it on our own!!

2. He gives it through His word

119:104 “I gain understanding from your precepts...”

119:130 “The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.”

- a. unfolding = opening, like a gate opens
- b. word packed with truth... expository teaching unfolds its truths
- c. verse by verse unfolding causes truth to enter powerfully, line by line

3. He gives it by opening your mind

Psalm 119:18 “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law.”

- a. hearing alone not enough

Matthew 13:14-15 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. ¹⁵ For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.

- b. closed minds cannot receive the things of God... our minds all start closed!!

1 Corinthians 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

If you're not born again through faith in Christ, you do not have the Holy Spirit living inside you... and if you do not have the Holy Spirit to teach you, you will NEVER understand the Bible

c. veil covers the hearts... turning the Christ & receiving the Spirit removes the veil

2 Corinthians 3:14-17 *But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. ¹⁶ But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*

Only God can give understanding and insight... but He gives it only to the humbled man or woman... to the spiritual beggar who searches for it like rare jewels

4. He gives it in response to heart-felt prayer

119:169 *May my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word.*

The Psalmist is crying out to God for understanding! "God, if you don't open the eyes of my heart, the Bible will be nothing more than black marks on a page!"

God gives precious understanding of His word to those who see it as precious, who seek Him with all their hearts

119:2 *Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart.*

119:10 *I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.*

Spiritual understanding is essentially a relationship with the God who made you and all things... straying from God's commands is a personal insult and affront to a passionate, intelligent, personal being; Spiritual understanding is ultimately a PERSON... Jesus Christ!

5. He gives it to those who will obey it

119:125 *"I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes."*

God alone gives spiritual understanding; He gives it to born-again people by the indwelling Holy Spirit; He gives it through texts of Scripture, when the person seeks it through prayer, and with a heart to obey.

C. Fruits of Understanding

1. Life itself

119:144 *Your statutes are forever right; give me understanding that I may live.*

a. physical life

Disobedience to God jeopardizes your very life! Sin deserves death, and stubborn disobedience can result in chastisement from the Lord, even death!

119:37 *“Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.”*

1 Corinthians 11:28-30 *A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.*

- b. spiritual life

John 17:3 *“Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”*

Spiritual understanding is eternal life... its very essence and lifeblood

- 2. Heart transformation

119:104 *“I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.”*

119:127-128 *Because I love your commands more than gold, more than pure gold, ¹²⁸ and because I consider all your precepts right, I hate every wrong path.*

- a. spiritual understanding changes what you love and what you hate
- b. sin loses its alluring power... every wrong path leads you away from God
- c. understanding changes DESIRE...
 - i) evil desire is the root sinfulness

James 1:14-15 *but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*

- ii) likewise holy desire is the root of godliness

Matthew 5:6 *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

- 3. Obedience

119:34 *Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart.*

- a. understanding God’s will enables you to follow Him
- b. without understanding, obedience is impossible
- c. a mind saturated in the Scripture leads to a life of daily joyful obedience

119:32 *I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free.*

D. Three glorious cycles

1. Meditation promotes understanding // Understanding promotes meditation

- a. of course, meditation produces deeper understanding

119:99 *I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.*

- b. AMAZING REVERSAL... understanding leads to deeper meditations

119:27 *Let me understand the teaching of your precepts; then I will meditate on your wonders.*

Illus.: Reinvesting in the business... successful businesses produce a profit; good businessmen reinvest their earnings back into the business for even greater future profits

A diamond mine that hasn't produced diamonds in decades hardly inspires its owner to stay up all night digging... but suppose suddenly he finds a diamond in one tunnel he'd never explored before; maybe he'd keep digging all night to find more

2. Understanding promotes obedience // obedience promotes understanding

- a. we just said "Understanding promotes obedience"... the more of God's Law is written on your heart, the more obedient your life will be
- b. YET amazingly, Psalm 119 also reverses it

119:100 *I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.*

A life of willing obedience to God affects your heart... it makes your spiritual eyes able to see more and more things in God's law for you're willing to do more and more for God

3. Obedience promotes further obedience

119:101 *"I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word."*

If you're living in sin, you won't want to read Scripture. Even worse, when you do read or hear the Bible taught, your sin nature will begin to twist the words to make them fit your sinful habits... sin affects understanding! You begin to suppress the truth (Romans 1) and try to make the Bible support your sin

Conversely, a life characterized by obedience opens up more and more Scripture to you

Illus. Praying over Scripture all night:

119:148 *My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.*

Surely we shouldn't take this literally, should we? But then you try it once, and it becomes the greatest night of spiritual growth ever

4. Ultimate goal: spiritual maturity [See diagram]

V. Application: Ride the Cycles to Spiritual Maturity

This is how the cycle works **if you're a Christian**

- 1) You come to God humbly: God, open my eyes to see new things in your word
- 2) You resolve to obey whatever He teaches you
- 3) You read carefully and deeply, stopping to meditate on each phrase... writing each part out for meaning
- 4) At the end, you humbly pray again: "God, enable me to obey what you're commanding me to do."
- 5) Keep doing this for a long time... meditation will produce understanding, understanding will produce obedience; previous patterns of obedience and of wonderful insights into God's word will feed on itself and cause you to love God's word more and more and read it more and more
- 6) Forty years later, you are much more "sanctified," more like Jesus than when you began.

If you're not a Christian, none of this will work for you. Start first by coming to Christ for salvation; then you'll have a teacher within your heart, the Holy Spirit!